

MarBEF data pages launched

By Edward Vanden Berghe

A KEY TASK OF THE MarBEF Network is the integration of different resources related to marine biodiversity. Part of these data are made available through the MarBEF website, on a series of data pages.

A first dataset deals with Biodiversity research sites, and is essentially an update of the database by including BIOMARE (Marine Biodiversity Research in Europe; www.biomare.org) sites. A second dataset is an inventory of European marine biodiversity datasets. And last but not least, we have ERMS (European Register of Marine Species) and EurOBIS (European node of the Ocean Biogeographic Information System). One more database, on research vessels, cruises and samples, is still under construction. Comments on the data pages are very welcome, and can be addressed to data@marbef.org.

Anyone with relevant scientific data is very welcome to get in touch with us, to see how we can collaborate in making the data more widely accessible. Even knowledge of the existence of datasets is useful, and will serve to feed our inventory of European marine biodiversity datasets, increase awareness on existing data and thus create possibilities for new collaborations. We hope that the number of records and the quality of the contents will constantly increase through collaboration and feedback from the users of the MarBEF data pages.

European Marine Biodiversity Research Sites

One of the objectives of the BIOMARE project was the selection of a network of Research Sites as the basis for long-term and large-scale

Table 1. MarBEF data – statistics.

Sites.....	141
Datasets.....	238
ERMS taxa.....	47,319
ERMS species.....	32,996
ERMS valid species	29,862
EurOBIS taxa	14,000
EurOBIS distribution records.....	350,000
EurOBIS data providers	9



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marine biodiversity research in Europe (more info: www.biomareweb.org). The results were published in project reports and on the BIOMARE website, and are now also available through the MarBEF data pages, including a geographical search interface. Deep-sea, ocean pelagic, experimental or extreme habitat sites proposed during the MarBEF project will be added to this database. Also, other sites will be added, such as marine protected areas, or areas designated in one of the international treaties.

European Marine Biodiversity Datasets

This database is an inventory of European marine biodiversity datasets. Once again, the BIOMARE project provided the basis. It has since been expanded with information collected during the kick-off meeting of Theme 1 in Oslo (see elsewhere in this issue for more information on that meeting). But obviously this is not a closed list: please do get in touch with us if you have relevant information; or alternatively, you can submit your biogeographic datasets by filling in an online form. The online questionnaire has deliberately been kept to the minimum number of fields, to encourage as many responses as possible. Any extra information that might be useful is of course very welcome. The metadatabase will serve as a tool to set priorities, and direct further activities to upgrade and expand ERMS and EurOBIS.

European Register of Marine Species (ERMS)

The initial register was the result of an EU project that started in April 1998 and ended in 2000. The species list is now already partly outdated, and will be revised; a detailed account of the plans for the update and the governance structure was given in the previous issue of this newsletter. Most of the taxonomic editors have now been identified. We are looking for scientists with knowledge of the local faunas to validate the contents of the

database and to add information on presence of species in each of the European countries.

European Ocean Biogeographic Information System (EurOBIS)

ERMS will only contain distribution information on the resolution of countries or major areas; the detailed distribution information, based on individual specimen records, will be available through the European node of the Ocean Biodiversity Information System, EurOBIS. This distributed system will integrate individual datasets on marine organisms into one large consolidated database, and can therefore provide a better understanding of long-term, large-scale patterns in European marine waters. Data made available to EurOBIS will automatically also be available to the international OBIS portal, and through there to GBIF (Global Biodiversity Information Facility; www.gbif.org). Right now, only a limited number of datasets is available but we hope that this will change very soon. ●

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